



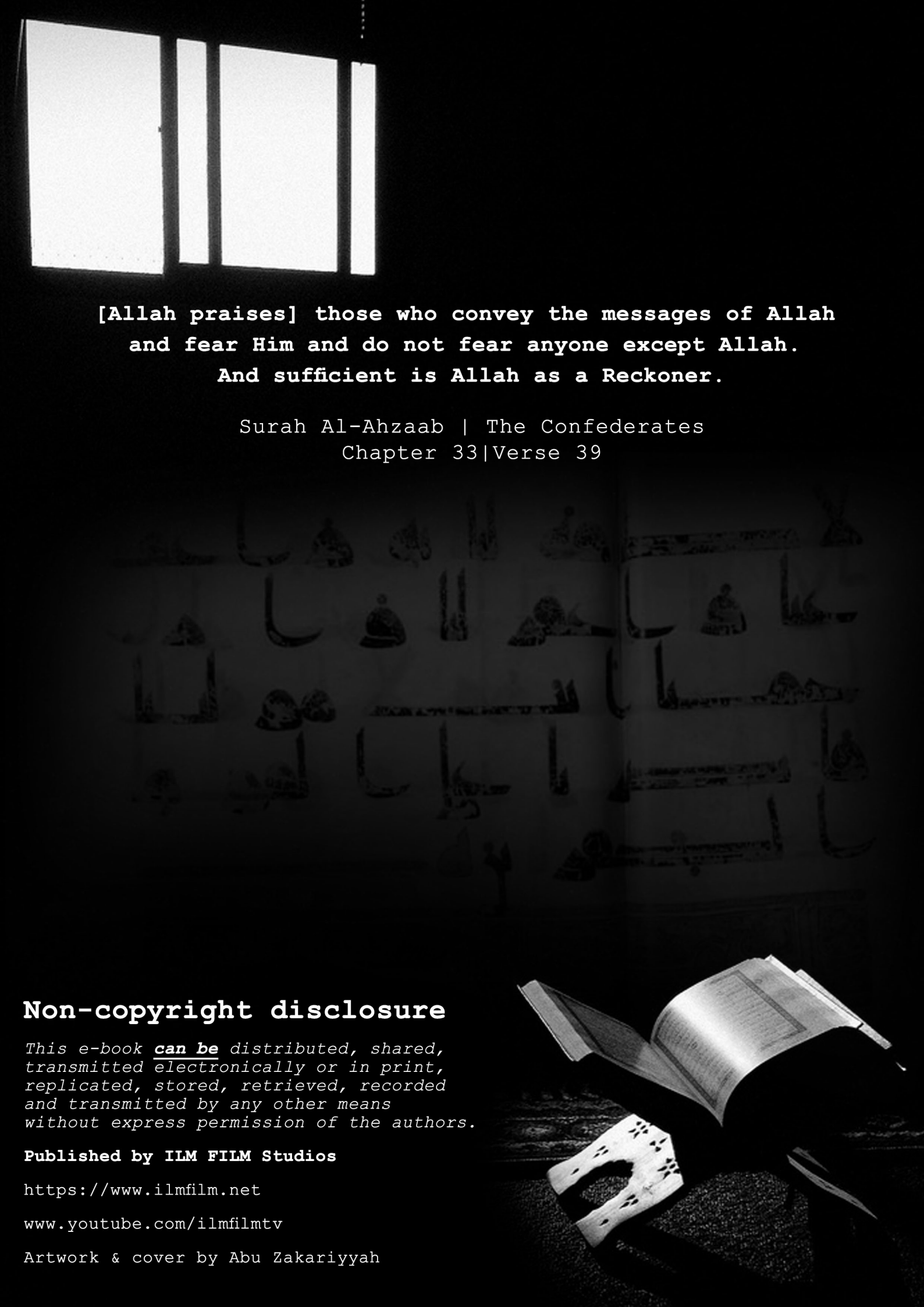
# GREAT MUSLIM LIVES

VOLUME VIII



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[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah  
and fear Him and do not fear anyone except Allah.  
And sufficient is Allah as a Reckoner.

Surah Al-Ahzaab | The Confederates  
Chapter 33 | Verse 39

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

# Foreword

May the Peace and Salutations of Allah be upon our beloved Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)  
The Trustworthy, The Final Prophet and Messenger of Allah.

*“Until the lion learns to speak, the tales of the hunter will be told”*

They remind us of our defeat, our degradation and our deviation from the pathways of progress, piety and prosperity. In such times it may be difficult to draw inspiration and find courage in our identity as contemporary Muslims, however history reminds us that Islam has always been strengthened and supported by men and women of integrity, virtue and of exemplary accomplishments.

It is with a heart full of optimism, hope and love for Al-Islaam that we present to the reader a rich catalogue of contemporary biographies, each one recounting the life and legacy of a great Muslim personality.

Collectively, all of our subjects have demonstrated outstanding will and determination to cherish and champion the legacy and beauty of Al-Islaam in its purest form.



# MASTER WANG ZI-PING (1881 - 1973)

## THE RIGHTEOUS FIST

### SHAOLIN SHEIKH

The Sheikh was a Shaolin Grandmaster, a champion of Kung Fu and the inventor of the *Eight Extremes Fist technique* as well as the *Green Dragon Sword* method. During the famous *Boxer Rebellion*. This courageous spirit was a member of a group known as *The Righteous and Harmonious Fists* combatting foreign imperialism and its' infamous *Eight-Nation Alliance*.

### IN DEFENCE OF THE DEEN

Sheikh Wang Zi Ping was born in 1881 during the Ching Dynasty in Hebei Province. Coming from a traditional Chinese community, he left his village to join the army, where he served as a Kung-Fu instructor.

A skillful fighter, Master Wang had defeated several European soldiers in hand to hand combat, on one occasion when a gang of German soldiers attempted to confiscate the precious doors of Quinzhou Mosque - which dated back to the Ming dynasty, Master Wang defended the mosque and demonstrated remarkable strength and agility, forcing the Germans to withdraw.



### DRAGON SPRING SWORD

An experienced warrior, Sheikh Wang had invented several combat techniques, among them was the *Dragon Spring Sword* which he developed after having studied varying styles of swordsmanship including Western fencing and Japanese kendo. He was also a published author who wrote instructions on exercises and advanced physical conditioning. Grand master Wang also featured in a few films - playing the role of the old martial arts master. A leading authority in the discipline, he simultaneously served as a senior instructor for the Shaolin Kung Fu division of the *Martial Arts Institute* in 1928 while also serving as the vice chairman of the *Chinese Martial Arts Association*. Sheikh Grandmaster Wang Zi Ping passed away in the year 1973 at the golden age of 92 years old.



■ 王菊蓉 供稿

青年时代的吴诚德在王子平先生的悉心指导下练习摔角术。



# GREAT MUSLIM LIVES



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# HAMIDUDDIN FARAHİ (1863 - 1930)

## COHERENCE

### A MODERN DAY LEGEND

Considered by some to be the Ibn Taymiyyah of his day, Hamiduddin Farahi was a literary mastermind whose comprehension of classical Arabic, Persian and Hebrew distinguished him from many of his contemporaries in the field of textual analysis of the Glorious Quran.

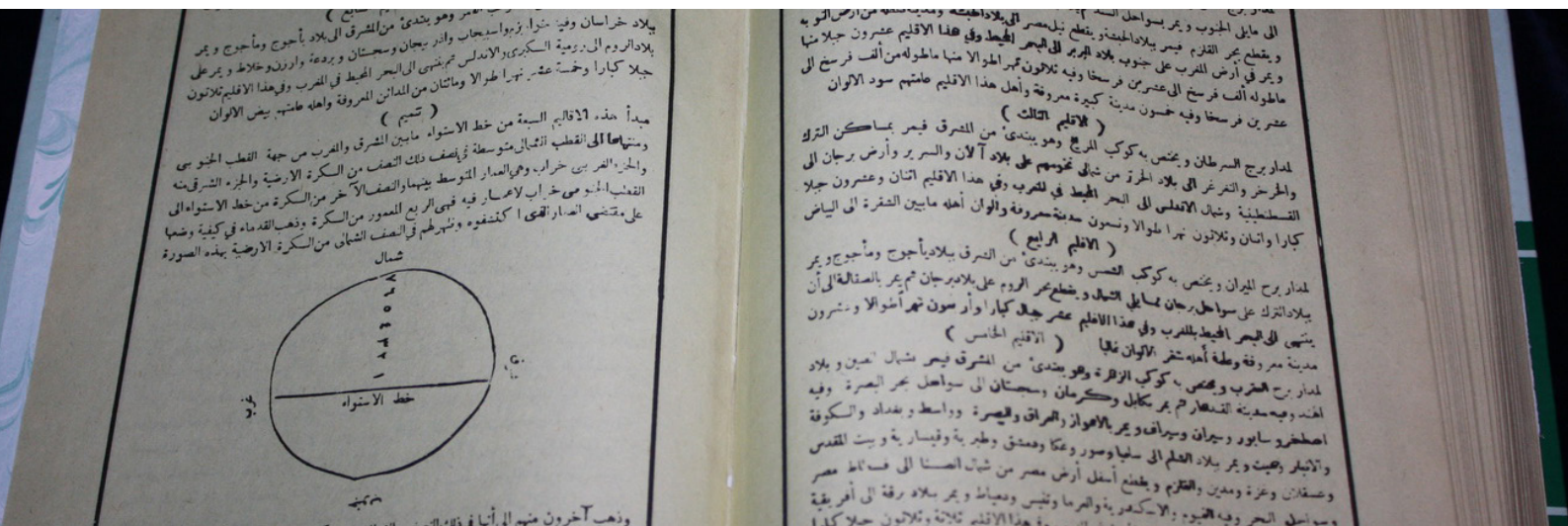
In a groundbreaking study that lasted nearly fifty years, Hamiduddin Farahi poured his vast intellectual expertise into deep contemplation and study of the Glorious book, resulting in his pioneering principle findings on the consistency, miraculous patterns and remarkable coherence or *Nazm* of the glorious Quran in its thematic order of verses, words and chapters, grammatical precision and phenomenal composition.

In addition to this outstanding contribution, he also reconstructed and revised all pre-requisite disciplines of the Arabic language required to study the Qur'an.



### ON COHERENCE

His findings on the topic of coherence or *Nazm* can be grouped into three key constituents: Order, Proportion and Unity. With this foundation, Hamiduddin Farahi demonstrated that varying interpretations of the Qur'an are as a direct result of disregarding thematic and structural coherence in the arrangement and mutual relationship of various Qur'anic verses and paragraphs. In other words, verses and chapters take on a new meaning when isolated from the overall theme and structure of the Quran thereby subtracting or adding multiple possible meanings to it. This principle, though seemingly obvious and simple – is far more profound and intricate than generally imagined.



### MIRACLES OF THE QURAN

He went on to declare several principle tools needed to comprehend and interpret the Qur'an, demonstrating that unless it is understood through a holistic approach, much of its miracles and wisdom will be overlooked. Renowned for his remarkable scholarship and insight, Hamiduddin Farahi died in 1930 - passing on an intellectual legacy from which contemporary scholars and researchers still derive invaluable insight into the miraculous structure and depth of Quranic Arabic.



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PAL



# MUHAMMAD ILYAS KANDHLAWI (1886 - 1944)

## THE REMINDER

### THE PILGRIMAGE

Established in 1926 to counter the influence of British colonialism and to revive the faith among Muslims following the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate, this movement now has 80 million members in 150 countries worldwide and is the single largest Muslim movement in modern times. But it all began in the Indian village of Kandhla where Muhammad Ilyas ibn Muhammad Ismail was born in the year 1886. The pioneering scholar studied Arabic and Persian in his early youth and went on to enroll into the Darul Uloom Deoband, aged twenty years old. However his call to service would come in the year 1925 while he was in Mecca performing his Pilgrimage, a pivotal turning point that ignited in him the desire to dedicate his life to the spiritual revival and reform of Muslims in India.



### SPREADING THE MESSAGE

When he returned home from his pilgrimage, Muhammad Ilyas lost no time - he organized graduates from Deoband and Saharanpur and sent them to the southwestern region of Delhi in a place known as Mewat – for the purpose of establishing a network of mosques and schools for its inhabitants. Although he did not officially assign any names to his movement, the group got its definitive title from the local people who simply called them *Tableeghis* – those who propagate the message.

Today its members congregate in Bangladesh annually, attracting close to 5 million attendees - nearly two million more than the official statistics for the Hajj pilgrimage. Muhammad Ilyas's legacy constitutes the single largest group and collective effort in the Muslim world today. He died in the year 1944 following severe fatigue and intestinal infection due to his rigorous and continual efforts to spread Islam.



# RASHID RIDHA (1865 - 1935)

## THE PUBLICIST

### THE THINKER

Certainly one of the most acrimonious and thought provoking thinkers from within the Muslim world in the twentieth century. Muhammad Rashid Ridha was somewhat of a champion in free thought and a prominent critic of the stagnating Muslim world. His central theme was that Islam as a religion is based on reason with rational deduction or *Ijtihad* being the very foundation of the sacred law.



### THE JOURNALIST

Rashid Ridha was born in the small village of al-Qalamun in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. Dating back to the year 1884, Rashid Ridha came into contact with an early edition of *Al-'Urwa al-wuthqa*, the journal published by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh.

Within just a few years, Rashid Ridha would travel to Cairo in 1897 in order to work with Muhammad 'Abduh. Within the space of a year, Rashid Ridha launched a new journal called *Al-Manar*, this weekly journal initially expounded on Quranic commentary but as Rashid Ridha slowly grew out of the teachings promoted by Muhammad 'Abduh and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani, he developed a more conformist approach to the religion calling for a return to the earliest sources for a more authentic interpretation of Islam according to reason and principle.



### SHIFTING LINES

Despite his departure from the teachings of Muhammad 'Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Ridha's later work still bore some resemblance to the principle theme of Muhammad 'Abduh's thought and philosophy, mainly that Islam needed to be reviewed through thinking and *ijtihad* in order to adapt to developments in science, culture and art. Rashid Ridha's legacy is a conflicted one, to some he was a literalist orthodox who called for a strict revival of Islam through the earliest sources, the Quran and the Hadith –while to many conservative and traditionalist scholars his novel and unprecedented interpretations and thoughts on several topics meant that he was perceived as a liberal and a radical reformist. Nevertheless, his ideas influenced many successive scholars and created a platform upon which the principles and urgency of *ijtihad* gained attention once more.



# KOTARO 'UMAR YAMAOKA (1909)

## THE PILGRIM

### INITIAL CONTACT

The very first chapter in Japan's recent history of Islam was opened by Mr Mitsutaro Takaoka, widely celebrated as the first Japanese Muslim in recorded history. Having embraced Islam in the year 1909 following a chance meeting in Bombay with the Russian-born scholar - Abdul Rashid Ibrahim, Mr Mitsutaro Takaoka thereafter changed his name to Umar Kotaro Yamaoka.



**GOING TO MECCA** Soon thereafter, Umar Yamaoka performed the Pilgrimage to Mecca becoming quite possibly the very first Japanese pilgrim in recorded history. Upon his return to Japan, Al Hajj Umar Yamaoka began sharing his experiences with the people of Japan throughout a series of lectures, discussions and conversations about Islam, the Hajj and the sacred cities of Makkah and Madinah.

According to historians, Islam first entered Japan as early as 1877, just a few years before the Ottoman Caliphate dispatched a naval vessel there in the year 1890, for a diplomatic mission. It has been reported that another Japanese man, by the name of Torajiro Yamada, was the first Japanese man in recorded history to have visited Turkey, where he subsequently converted to Islam and changed his name to Abdul Khalil.



### SHARING THE GIFT

Nevertheless, Al Hajj Umar Yamaoka's work is a pioneering and influential factor in the spread of Islam in Japan, having authored several books inviting the Japanese to the treasure and gift of Islam.

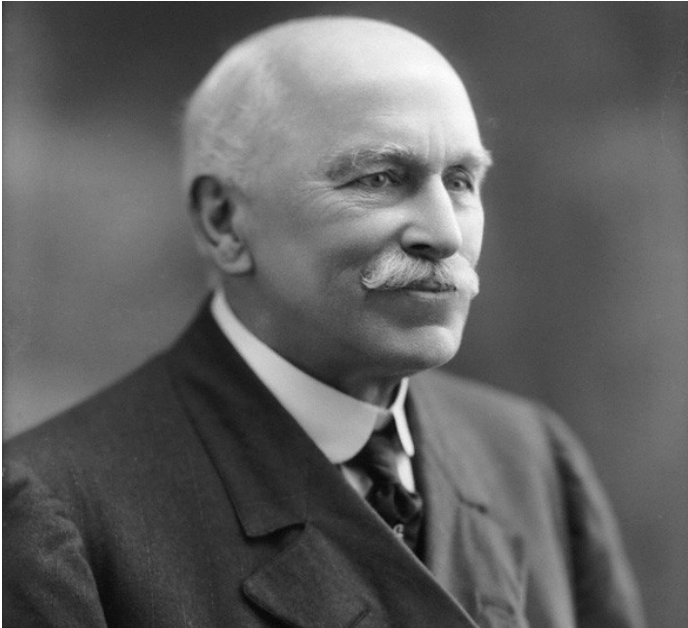
# ROWLAND ALLANSON-WINN (1855 - 1935)

## BARON HEADLEY

### A MAN OF LETTERS

Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Farooq was the fifth in a line of Barons. An early British convert to Islam, he was born in London in 1855, his given name at birth was Rowland George Allanson-Winn. As a member of the aristocracy, the young Rowland received a thorough education at some of the finest institutes in the UK, attending Westminster, Trinity College – Cambridge, Middle Temple, and King's College London.

Upon qualifying as a civil engineer he got involved in several infrastructure development projects in British India. Rowland was also a keen sportsman, he loved boxing in particular - having authored a number of essays and articles on the discipline.



### BRITISH MUSLIM SOCIETY

In the year 1913, Rowland George inherited the high ranking title of Baron Headley in the same year in which he embraced Islam and changed his name to Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Farooq on November 16th 1913.

This pragmatic and intelligent English gentleman established the *British Muslim Society* within a year of his conversion and even authored several books on Islam. Not one to waste time or opportunity to learn more about Islam, the Shaikh performed the great Hajj pilgrimage twice to Mecca and travelled across parts of the Muslim world. Upon returning to the United Kingdom he invested much of his efforts developing the *Woking Muslim Mission*.

### A HOME IN THE COUNTRY

Respected and revered for his innate leadership traits and his remarkable education, Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Farooq was offered the throne of Albania in the year 1925 which he turned down despite the huge offer of \$500k and a salary of \$50k a year. Instead he continued his work in the local community and in 1929 he retreated to his residence in Wiltshire, a few years before his death in 1935.





# AHMET ALI ÇELIKTEN (1883 - 1969)

## THE AERONAUT

### PASSION FOR THE SKY

Perhaps one of the very first African Muslims to pilot an aircraft in the history of aviation. Ahmet Ali Çelikten was born in the coastal city of Izmir, Turkey. The proud son of an African Muslim couple of mixed Yoruba and Turkish ethnicity. From an early age, Ahmet had dreamt of sailing the waves and navigating the mighty oceans. His break came in 1904 when he was granted a place at the naval military school.

He completed his training in 1908 and became a first lieutenant. As the events of the First World War were unfolding, Ahmet transferred his navigation skills towards aviation. In 1914 he began his air cadet training at the *Deniz Tayyare Mektebi* – a Flight School near Istanbul, two short years later on November 11th 1916 - he graduated from the academy and got his wings, remarkably, he was qualified several months before the first black pilots were licensed in France and America, they were Frenchman Pierre Réjon and the American Eugene J. Bullard.



### BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

In December 1917, amidst escalating military conflict, Ahmet Ali Çelikten travelled to Germany for advanced training in Berlin. He was subsequently promoted to the rank of Captain as the war continued to intensify. Ahmet would suffer the loss of his younger brother who was killed in battle.

His role grew more important during the early 1920s as the Turkish War for Independence threatened to destabilize and decimate the towns and villages of his homeland. He served at several outposts near the Mediterranean and Black Sea, mounting aerial reconnaissance patrols in order to monitor the advancing British, Italian, Greek, and French military - and in 1928, he was once more promoted, serving as vice-secretary at the air force headquarter in Konya.

A courageous and exemplary officer and aviation pioneer, Ahmet Ali received several honours including the *Bahri Aircraft Medal*, he is also celebrated today as perhaps the first aircraft pilot of African Ancestry. After a lifetime of high flying achievements and towering honours, Ahmet Ali Çelikten passed away in 1969.

# MUHAMMAD ABDEL-KRIM AL KHATTABI (1882 - 1963)

## LIBERTY AND PEACE

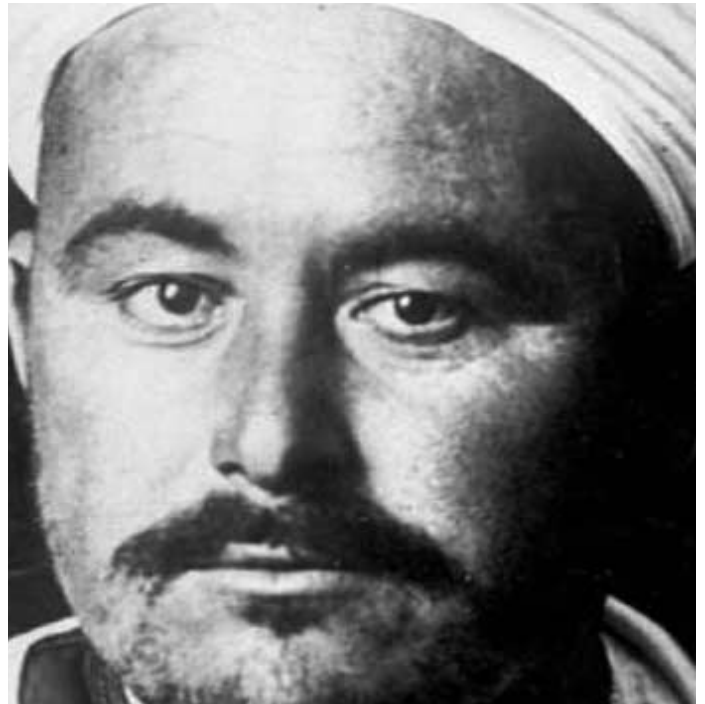
### A NAME TO REMEMBER

He was the general who's remarkable legacy later became the subject of deep study and profound admiration by the iconic freedom fighter, Che Guevara of Cuba. Muhammad bin Abdel-Krim al Khattabi, celebrated for his remarkable resistance against Spain during the Rif war – was born in Morocco in the year 1882. He later attended the University of Qayrawan in Fez, completing his studies in 1906 shortly before settling in the Spanish enclave of Melilla, to the North of Morocco where he taught at a Hispano-Arabic school while also editing articles for *El Telegrama del Rif*.

### IN DEFENCE OF PEACE

However it was shortly before the end of the First World War that Abdel-Krim learnt of Spain's colonial plans for Morocco, thus in July 1921 he began gathering and organizing his people for their ominous fate. His objective was to unite the ranks of diverse tribes into an independent, disciplined and coordinated unit capable of resisting and repelling the Franco-Spanish armies.

General Manuel Fernandez Silvestre of Spain dismissed Abdel-Krim's efforts, thinking that the Moroccan's resistance would be demolished in just a few hours, however he soon realized his error when Abdel-Krim's men defeated the Spanish battalions a number of times, most notably at the battle of Annoual in July 1921 when Spanish garrisons were forced to retreat following three weeks of intense resistance by Abdel-Krim's fighters.



### FORCED SURRENDER

Thereafter, humbled by defeat and incensed by rage – desiring revenge, the Spanish colonialists unleashed a brutal campaign upon the civilian population for almost half a decade. By May 1926, the Spanish army was reinforced by the French in a combined force of two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers – they overwhelmed and outnumbered the fighters with by Abdel-krim, resulting in a regrettable but necessary surrender, marking the end of his struggle. Abdel-Krim al Khattabi was deported to the island of La Reunion but managed to escape to Port Said in Egypt where he was granted asylum and later died in February 1963.



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